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*Les Abonnements d'Ouvriers sur les Lignes de Chemins de Fer Belges et leurs Effets Sociaux.* Instituts Solvay, *Notes et Memoires*, No. 11. By ERNEST MAHAIM. (Brussels: Misch et Thron. 1910. Pp. xv, 259.)

The arrangements for laborers to travel at special rates on the Belgian railways is not altogether a new subject of study. The author of this work has undertaken, however, to add a contribution of statistical information that will increase greatly the store of reliable knowledge of the subject. With evidently considerable difficulty these statistics have been brought together and embodied in the work to such an extent that they constitute a very considerable portion of the book. Beginning with a very brief account of the history of the law and a description of its provisions, there follows the more elaborate statistical study. Between one fourth and one fifth of the entire labor population of the country are commuters, and nearly one-half of the daily travel is made up of workmen. In that portion devoted to the social effects, the most important part, are considered the effects of these conditions on concentration of population, the labor market, the health of the laborer, his family life, housing conditions, rent, intellectual and moral influences, and the broader social effects in the life of the national community. Many of these conclusions are of unusual interest, based as they are upon the large array of facts contained in the several tables.

The use of workmen's tickets has done much to check the depopulation of the country districts. Yet there is an influence exercised through the knowledge of city life and easy travel that may ultimately increase urban concentration. It seems especially easy for the industries to recruit their labor force. Particularly is this true of the great industries. The plan tends to make of all Belgium one labor market, to the elimination of local monopolies and to the advantage of consumers.

From the point of view of the laborer himself there appear to be gains in improvement of housing conditions, conveniences of life and ownership of homes. It prevents the bidding up of rents and keeps the family within the hygienic environs of the country. The intellectual advantages are in a certain measure attended by moral disadvantages. The conditions prevailing in the coaches are not good; overcrowding, poor seating accommodations, and bad ventilation characterize these workmen's trains. The time to and from the station, the time on the train, added to

the actual working hours, make such a long day as to leave insufficient time for physical rest and for recreation and enjoyment of family associations.

In a large way there is evident in the *milieu social* a greater homogeneity or social density. In short, the advantages of the system are evident and of great importance. Yet it is by no means perfect,—being accompanied by inconveniences that are both serious and pernicious. These, in the opinion of the author, both can and must be eliminated. Hours of labor must be shortened especially for those who avail themselves of the special rates of travel; speed of trains increased so as to lessen the time on the road; conditions of travel improved in respect both of comfort and of health; temptations now common must be controlled or eliminated. These are largely matters of technique, and the great importance of the system in its main points demands that they receive careful attention. Reforms in these matters must be undertaken only after careful study. It is a beginning of such a study that the author has undertaken.

The book is characterized by a carefulness and temperateness of statement and by an unfailing habit to look upon all sides of these important questions that commends it as a reliable piece of work.

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*Die Lohnämter in Victoria.* By ROBERT BOEHRINGER. *Statts- und Sozialwissenschaftliche Forschungen* Herausgegeben, von Gustav Schmoller und Max Sering. No. 154. (Leipzig: Duncker and Humblot. 1911. Pp. viii, 197. 5 m.)

This is a very thorough and systematic study of the wage-boards of Victoria, based upon statutes, factory reports, and other state documents, and upon the investigations of Clark and Aves. There are practically no references to the reports of employers' and workers' associations nor to public opinion expressed in newspapers. In the introductory chapters a useful historical sketch is given of the factory acts and other labor laws of Australia and New Zealand, particularly those providing for conciliation and arbitration in industrial disputes. The New Zealand system, with the arbitration court as its characteristic feature, was established in 1894; the wages-boards of Victoria were created by the law of 1896. In both countries the legislation was passed